

British Columbia

Protest against vaccine mandates at Kelowna Remembrance Day gathering was 'a step too far,' RCMP say

Investigators seeking video of Thursday's disruption; Cranbrook cenotaph vandalized in separate incident

CBC News · Posted: Nov 11, 2021 6:10 PM PT | Last Updated: November 12, 2021



A still from a video shows a demonstrator protesting against COVID-19 vaccine mandates at a Remembrance Day ceremony in Kelowna, B.C., being confronted by several onlookers. (Courtesy of Kelowna Now)

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Mounties in Kelowna, B.C., are investigating after dozens of people protesting vaccine mandates disrupted an informal Remembrance Day gathering at the city's cenotaph on Thursday.

RCMP say when officers arrived on the scene at about 10:55 a.m. local time, they found between 75 and 100 protesters interrupting the proceedings.

"Kelowna RCMP officers support a person's or groups' right to protest, but when they choose to willfully interrupt the assembly of citizens at a Remembrance Day ceremony, this is a step too far," Insp. Adam MacIntosh said in a statement.

"The Kelowna RCMP will be fully investigating this event to determine what offence, criminal or otherwise, may have been committed and, if appropriate, the submission of charges or fines."

A formal public Remembrance Day ceremony was not held in the city this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but police say veterans and members of the public had gathered at the cenotaph to pay their respects.

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An anti-vax protester steals the microphone during an unofficial Remembrance Day ceremony at the cenotaph in Kelowna's City Park.

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2:46 PM · Nov 11, 2021



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****Correction: They brought their own microphone.****

3:06 PM · Nov 11, 2021

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Local news outlet Kelowna Now posted a video of the event that shows a woman with a microphone speaking against vaccine mandates.

She is confronted by a number of angry onlookers, including a man with military medals on his chest who tells her, "It's not about you. It's about our veterans."

Matt Glen told CBC News he attended the cenotaph with his wife, and they were far back in the crowd when the disruption began.

"All of a sudden we heard a lot of booing and screaming and commotion, and then we saw veterans ... storming out. Some of them were crying, some were yelling. They were all upset," he said.

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Another witness, Patrick McGeough, said he was shocked by the behaviour of the demonstrators.

"It's the most heart-wrenching display I've ever witnessed in my decades going to Remembrance Day," he said.

"I am speechless and conflicted by what occurred."

Kelowna RCMP are asking anyone who captured video of the event to send a copy to investigators.

Cranbrook cenotaph vandalized

More than 500 kilometres east, RCMP in Cranbrook, B.C., are investigating after the city's cenotaph was defaced with graffiti early Thursday ahead of Remembrance Day ceremonies.

"As a community, we are beyond disappointed by the disrespectful actions of those responsible for defacing such an important monument on such an important day for all Canadians," read a statement on behalf of the city.

"This act does not speak to the character and values of our citizens and our community."

The city said staff, RCMP and fire crews were able to "quickly" remove the graffiti before the event.

Images of the graffiti are being widely shared on social media. RCMP and the city have been asked to verify the images.

Tom Shypitka, MLA for Kootenay East, said the vandalism was "brainless."

"Absolutely nonsense. One of the stupidest acts I've ever seen," he said in an interview.

"I'm not sure where people's heads are at these days. When we're talking about some people in our society that made the greatest sacrifices of all time and to be defaced like that ... [it's] just so irresponsible."

Anyone with information about the vandalism is asked to call Cranbrook RCMP.

With files from Janella Hamilton and Megan Stewart

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